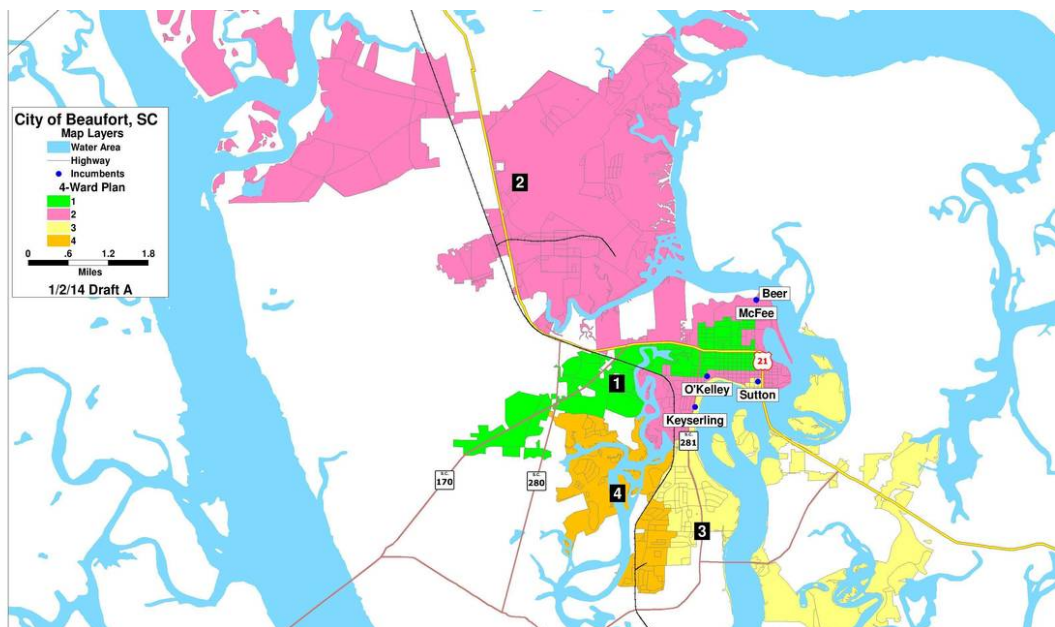


ELECTIONS

# NAACP creates maps showing Beaufort City Council district options

BY ERIN MOODY - [EMOODY@BEAUFORTGAZETTE.COM](mailto:EMOODY@BEAUFORTGAZETTE.COM)

MAY 07, 2014 12:14 PM, UPDATED MAY 08, 2014 12:51 PM



NAACP districting proposal "A." *SUBMITTED*

In a push to improve minority representation on city council, the NAACP has presented maps to the city of Beaufort that require all council members except the mayor to be elected by district.

Currently, council members are elected at large.



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"We will have a response," he said. "I'm not at liberty to share how and what."

The letter requests an official response in writing by May 19.

Darryl Murphy, president of the Burton-Dale-Beaufort NAACP branch, is working with the national NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund to end at-large elections for council seats and adopt single-member districts. He believes such a move would improve the chances of a minority winning a council seat.

"Our concern is having representation, and we feel the maps are a strong effort that we've made to try to make sure everything is inclusive," Murphy said Wednesday.

The last two black council members were Fred Washington Jr., who served from 1979 to 1993, and Alice Wright, who served from 1982 to 1987.

The NAACP and Harvey have been trading letters since November. City officials have said they see no way to draw a contiguous district with a black majority.

The NAACP maps, which use census data, show three alternatives, with either four or six districts that would include one majority-black district. The mayor would continue to be elected at large.

The four-district configuration would create a district with a 53.97 percent black majority.

The six-district proposal would create a district with a 52.55 percent black majority. Both are largely centered in the Northwest Quadrant neighborhood.

Murphy said he would not discuss the maps until after the city responds.

"We have an idea of what would work, but I can't answer that right now," he said.

The maps use line-of-sight rules to connect districts across waterways such as Battery Creek and the Beaufort River. That allows for contiguous districts, the April 23 letter says. Beaufort County Council districts currently cross waterways, it notes.

The letter also says the NAACP would be willing to join the city in requesting that a state demographer come up with a district plan.

Of the current council membership, the proposed districts would most directly affect Councilwoman Donnie Beer and Councilman Mike McFee, who live in the Pigeon Point neighborhood and would be in the same district.

In its letter, the NAACP says there is no way to avoid that situation.

Councilman George O'Kelley Jr. would be in the district with a majority of black voters. He said he's not worried about the effect of new districts on his seat. He is concerned, however, about gerrymandering districts.

Mayor Billy Keyserling said he's studying the maps so he can explain them to residents.

The maps "are confusing because of the way they are broken up and gerrymandered," he said. "But I understand what they are doing."

If a district plan were to go forward, it would likely have to be put to a referendum for voters to decide, he said.

Follow reporter Erin Moody at [twitter.com/IPBG\\_Erin](https://twitter.com/IPBG_Erin).

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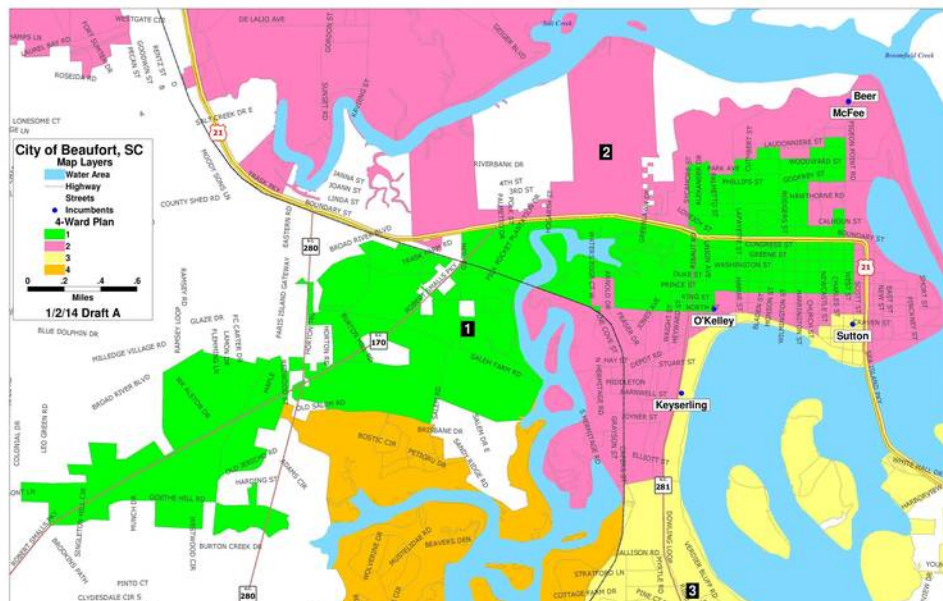
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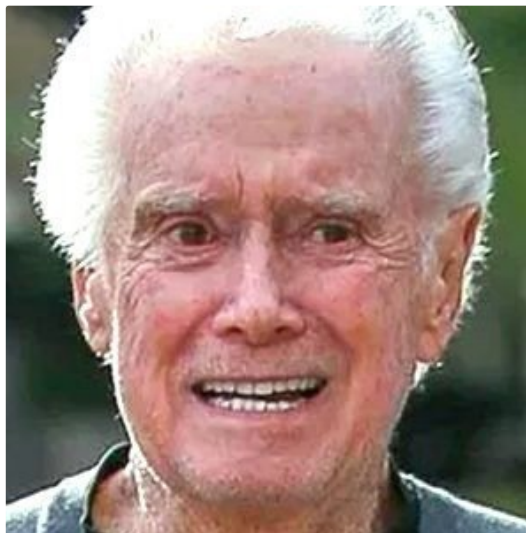
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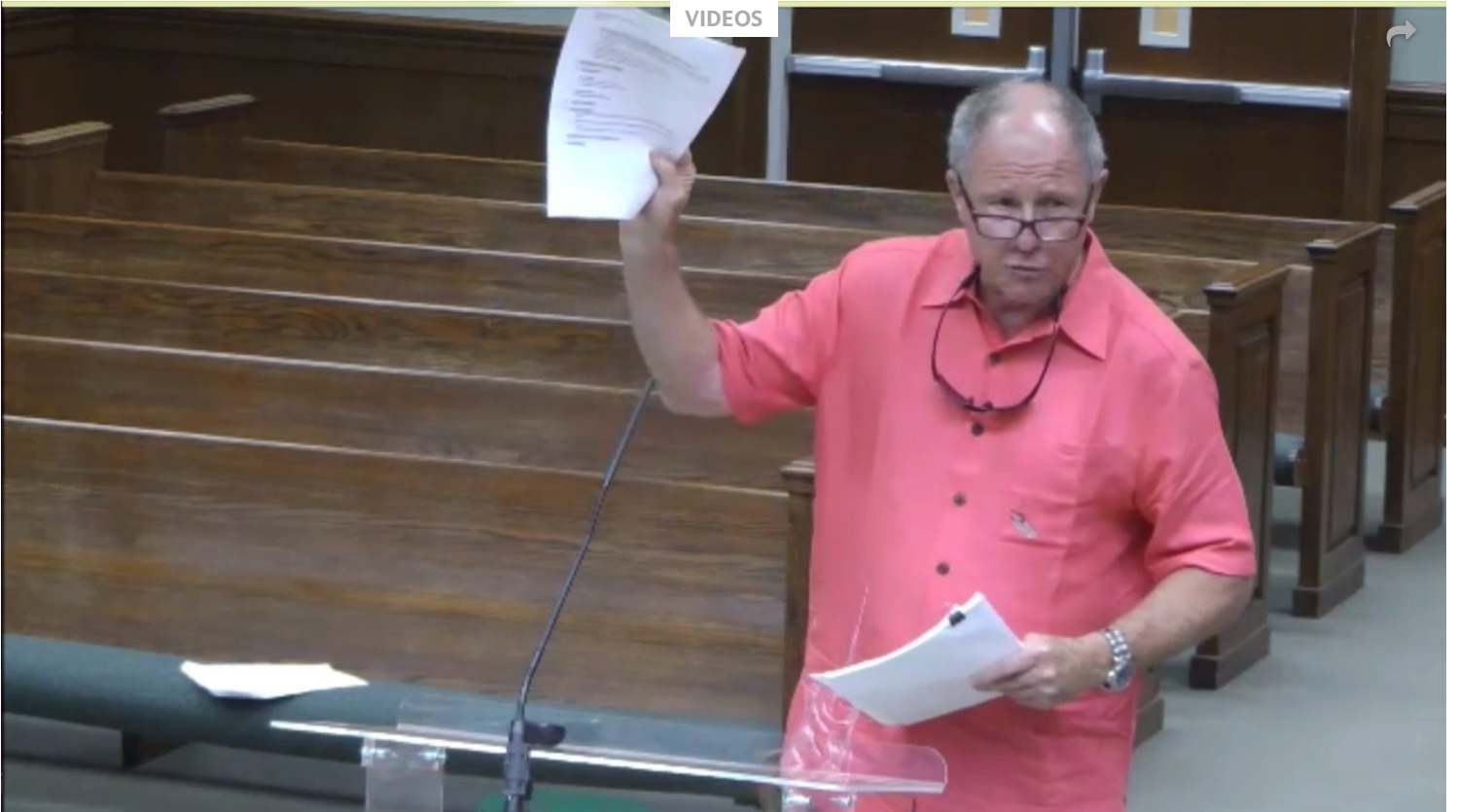


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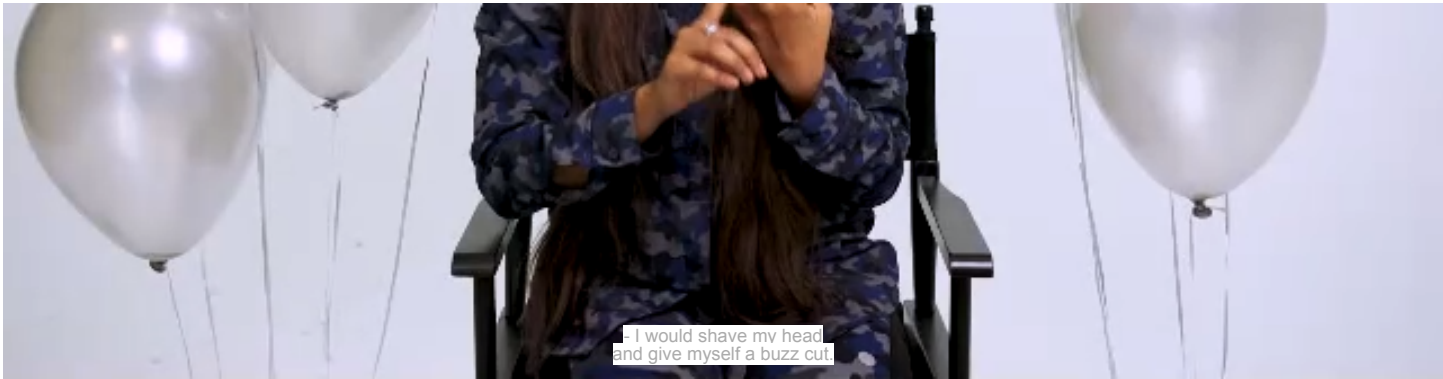
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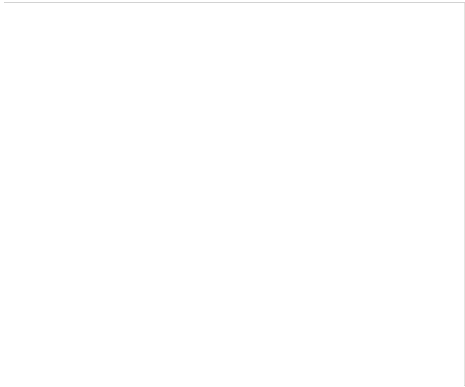




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